

**DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION**

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**Agenda Item No. 10**

November 5, 1999

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director

Subject: Update on McCormack-Williamson Tract/Bean Ranch  
*(For Commission Information Only)*

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Mike Eaton, Director of the Cosumnes River Preserve for the Nature Conservancy will update the Commission on the status of studies and activities on McCormack-Williamson Tract/Bean Ranch and the Cosumnes River Preserve.

The Nature Conservancy closed escrow on the property on September 30, 1999. Funds for acquisition were received from CALFED through a Category III grant.

McCormack-Williamson Tract is located in Sacramento County, just north of the boundary between Sacramento and San Joaquin Counties.

Attached are a copy of the letter sent to Mr. Eaton after the Commission discussed the proposed project in March 1999, and a location map. Please contact staff if you need a copy of the earlier staff report.

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April 26, 1999

Mike Eaton, Project Manager  
Cosumnes River Project  
13501 Franklin Boulevard  
Galt, CA 95632

Subject: Comments on the Briefing and Public Workshop on Proposal of Cosumnes Preserve to Acquire and Modify Management of McCormack Williamson Tract, Sacramento County.

Dear Mr. Eaton:

Thank you for attending the Delta Protection Commission meeting in March and presenting a briefing on the McCormack Williamson Tract project. As you know, CALFED asked that the Delta Protection Commission serve as a forum for public review and discussion of proposed projects in the Delta funded by CALFED.

At the close of the public workshop, Chairman McCarty summarized three key issues discussed in the workshop:

- Conversion of farmland.
- The source of additional water needed if converted from irrigated agriculture to wetland habitat.
- Adequacy of buffers between a restoration site and adjacent and nearby agricultural lands.

In addition, the following comments were presented at the public workshop. Regarding design of the flood component of the project:

- The need to prevent impacts to downstream islands from flooding impacts.
- Consider adding a weir at the southern end of the site to move flood waters off site.
- In the design of a flood control project, start at the downstream end and work up to prevent pushing flood waters onto downstream landowners and creating another problem.

Regarding the possible restoration of the site to tidal action to create aquatic habitat:

- The need to address possible impacts to surrounding agricultural lands, such as seepage.
- The need to protect the interiors of the levees on McCormack Williamson Tract to protect downstream levees from floodwaters.
- The source of water for a tidal wetland (average water use for irrigated agriculture is about 3 ac ft per acre, and the average water use for tidal wetland is 7 ac ft per acre).
- Ensure that any habitat enhancement project is part of a regional solution to flooding.
- Consider a project alternative that keeps the upper areas of the site in agriculture.

Regarding any project which includes habitat creation:

- Protect prime agricultural land from conversion to other uses.
- Address the need to mitigate loss of prime agricultural land to habitat.
- Provide “safe harbor” for adjoining or nearby farmland from endangered species impacts from a habitat restoration site.
- Ensure that creation of habitat does not restrict normal agricultural practices on adjacent lands.
- Incorporate buffers, as described in the Commission’s regional plan, in the design of a habitat project.
- Describe proposed public use of the property, and ensure there are not adverse impacts to adjacent landowners from public use of the lands (trespass, vandalism, litter, etc).
- Develop a plan for funding long-term maintenance of a habitat restoration project.
- Research CEQA issues associated with acquisition of land for conversion to habitat.
- Research impacts of canceling the Williamson Act contract on the project site.

We look forward to working with you and the CALFED staff on development of a regional project to address flooding issues in this area of the Delta and, if possible, to provide habitat enhancement. The conversion of agricultural land to habitat is a difficult issue for the Commission to address because it is new, complex, and controversial. The Commissioners seek to be open, honest, and deal with these projects in a forthright manner to develop a process for reviewing these projects that all groups can participate in and agree to.

Thank you for seeking input from the Commission and the public in the Delta.

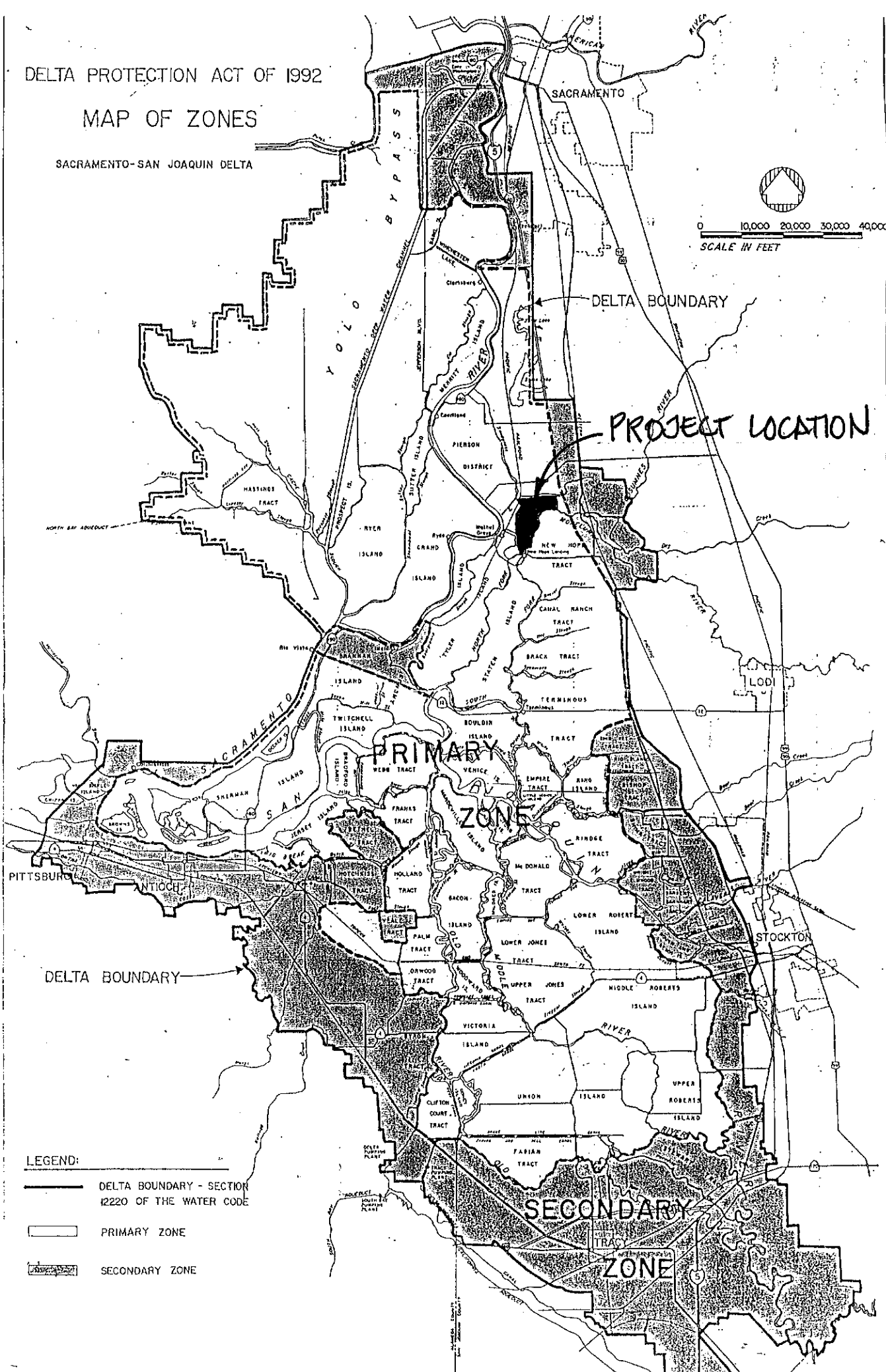
Sincerely,

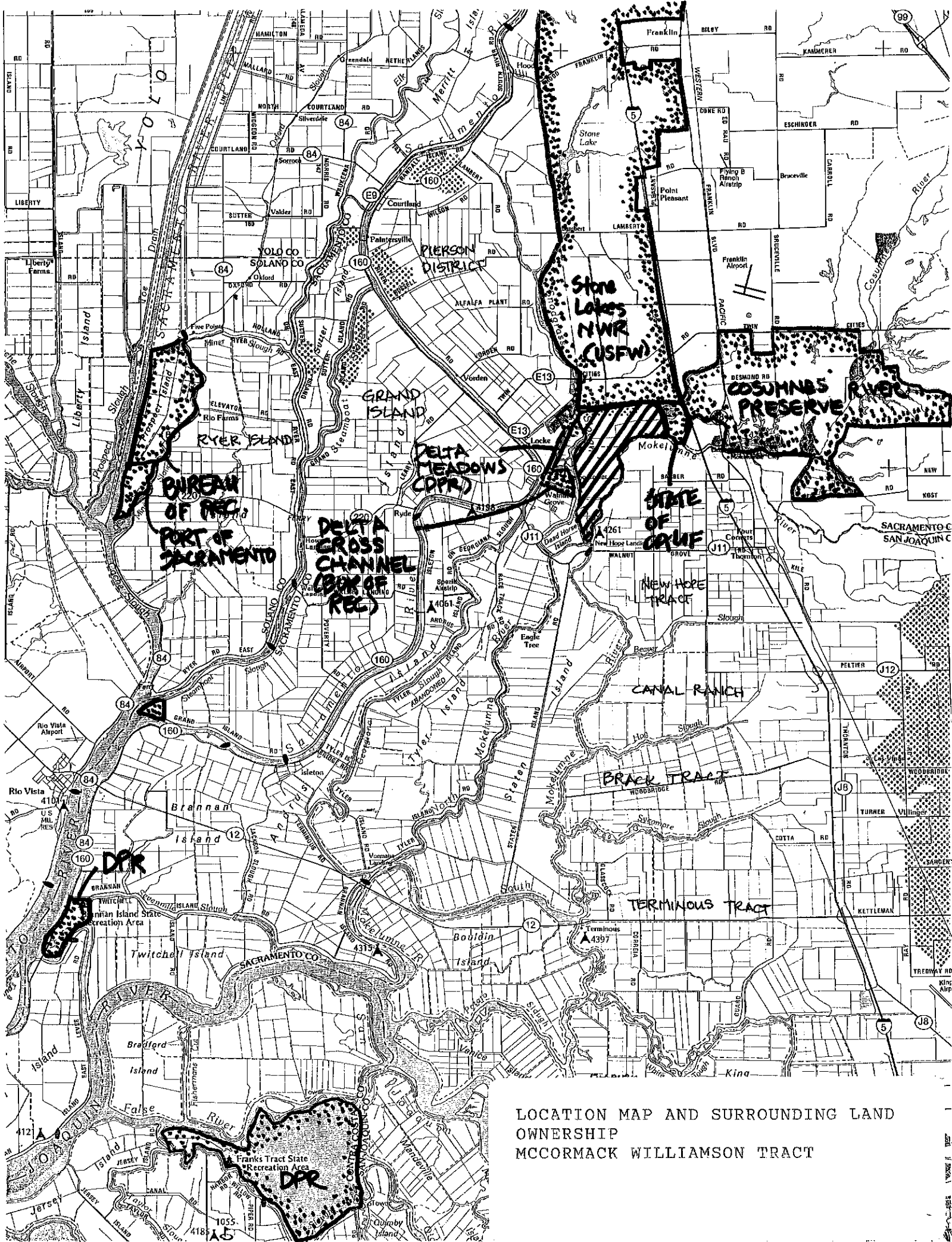
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margit Aramburu", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Margit Aramburu  
Executive Director

cc: Delta Protection Commission

## MAP OF ZONES





LOCATION MAP AND SURROUNDING LAND  
OWNERSHIP  
MCCORMACK WILLIAMSON TRACT